

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release June 8, 1977

Million 202/343-4895

A NEW COLOR FILM PORTRAYS THE WHOOPING CRANE'S FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

The whooping crane, international symbol of endangered wildlife, stars in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's new film, "A Great White Bird," the Department of the Interior announced today.

The 50-minute color movie pays cinematic tribute to a great bird's stubborn fight for survival against all odds and to the work of many individuals who have dedicated themselves to preserving the whooping crane as a viable species on this planet.

Photographed on location in the United States and Canada, the film traces the history of whooping crane conservation, from the early crusades to protect the birds led by Robert Porter Allen of the National Audubon Society to today's scientific experiments aimed at increasing whooper numbers.

More than 2 years in the making, the film documents the exhausting search for the cranes' mysterious breeding grounds and their perilous 2,500-mile annual migration from the Texas Gulf Coast to the Canadian north. But the whooper itself is the true star of "A Great White Bird" as this elusive creature is captured on film leaping high in its ballet-like mating dance, tending its young in the solitude of Canada's remote Northwest Territories, feeding leisurely in the Texas marshes where it winters, and soaring high in majestic flight.

Several times during this century, the population of migratory whooping cranes has plummeted to less than 20 birds, leaving the species teetering on the brink of extinction. Although whooper numbers are still low, the film ends on a cautious note of optimism as it portrays U.S. and Canadian biologists working on a unique project to augment the current population by creating a second wild whooping crane flock at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho.

"A Great White Bird" was produced by the National Film Board of Canada in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service. It is available for rental and purchase from the National Audiovisual Center. A 3-day rental is \$17.50 and the purchase price is \$231.50. Address inquiries to the National Audiovisual Center, General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. 20409.